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SUBJECT: FOREIGN NGO RE-REGISTRATION NEARING ITS END

REF: A. MOSCOW 12637

[¶](#)B. MOSCOW 12471

[¶](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Federal Registration Service (FRS) has re-registered 176 foreign NGOs as of December 1, with another 15 still under consideration, and it is nearing the end of this process. Of the 29 NGOs tracked by USAID, 21 have been re-registered, and eight are awaiting decisions from FRS. For the NGOs still attempting to get re-registered, most have had applications returned for corrections in minor, technical details. In the few cases we know where an NGO has been refused, one has overcome the refusal and two others are resubmitting their applications.
END SUMMARY.

LATEST COUNT

[¶](#)2. (U) FRS is nearing completion of adjudication of applications filed by foreign NGOs for re-registration. According to the latest official statistics, as of December 1, FRS has registered 176 NGOs and has applications from another 15 (six of them American) under review. FRS does not post statistics of those NGOs that have submitted applications but had them returned for revision. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that 11 of 15 foreign organizations working in the North Caucasus have been registered.

[¶](#)3. (SBU) In its own survey of 29 NGOs, USAID found that eight are still unregistered and in various stages of resubmitting applications following comments from FRS. They are ABA/CEELI, MiraMed, Doctors of the World, Johns Hopkins University, International Rescue Committee, World Vision, Foundation for Russian-American Economic Cooperation, and Eurasia Foundation. Reasons for the delays in re-registration range from minor revisions requested by FRS, such as placement of apostilles or wording changes (International Rescue Committee, World Vision, ABA/CEELI, Johns Hopkins) to larger questions about tax-exempt status in the U.S. (Foundation for Russian-American Economic Cooperation). Eurasia Foundation was told that there were no problems with its application, but that it had been sent to a review "commission" pending a final decision. (NOTE: Eurasia Foundation is the first NGO to have reported the existence of this "commission," and it is not clear what the "commission" is. END NOTE) NGOs that have been asked for minor revisions told us they do not believe delays in re-registering them were politically motivated, but rather, that FRS has inconsistent in reviewing documents.

[¶](#)4. (SBU) FRS has not publicly released information on the NGOs refused. Three NGOs have told us they have been refused. One of them, Handicapped International, successfully re-applied shortly after its initial refusal. Russia Justice Initiative will submit a new application after being refused and further discussion with FRS (ref A).

Doctors of the World was refused on November 27, despite on-going discussions with FRS, and is awaiting official notification of the reasons for its refusal.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

15. (SBU) Other NGOs that have been registered are now in the process of submitting required annual activity reports and quarterly financial statements. They said that thus far, FRS has taken a casual approach to these reports (ref B). An interagency commission recently circulated the final draft of reporting guidelines seeking additional comments from NGOs. USAID's review of this final draft indicated some small improvements on previous drafts, such as a revision that NGOs had to report only on "major" activities in the annual reports, but generally the guidelines seem to be a restatement of the original forms promulgated in April.

COMMENT

16. (SBU) Re-registration of foreign NGOs has not been without its problems, but generally the results have borne out the view that most NGOs would ultimately be registered. At this point, it appears that the difficulties some NGOs have experienced are more the result of the bureaucracy instituting a new process than any ill intentions toward them or their activities. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and some others that potentially could have run afoul of the GOR were registered, and several of those awaiting decisions have been told informally that there should be no further problem in getting registered. FRS continues to say that those refused may re-apply immediately,

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and the two organizations we know that have been refused intend to do so. We will continue to follow their progress, and perhaps more importantly, the FRS's reporting guidelines and their application.

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